

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

1. **(currently amended)** A container for holding items to be microbially deactivated in a reprocessor, comprised of:

a generally cup-shaped tray having a bottom wall and a continuous side wall extending to one side from the periphery of said bottom wall, said bottom wall and said side wall defining a cavity for receiving instruments and items to be microbially deactivated;

a lid attachable to said tray, said lid dimensioned to cover said cavity;

a fluid inlet in said tray communicating with said cavity; [[and]]

a fluid outlet in said tray communicating with said cavity, said fluid inlet and said fluid outlet each having a flexible valve element that is movable by a mechanical actuator on said reprocessor between an open position to allow fluid flow through said container during a deactivation cycle and a closed position sealing said cavity; and

said flexible valve element having a first portion movable relative to said tray and a second portion fixed relative to said tray.

2. **(currently amended)** A container as defined in claim 1, wherein said second portion of said flexible valve elements [[are]]is attached to said tray.

3. **(currently amended)** A container as defined in claim 2, wherein each of said flexible valve elements has a normally closed position.

4. **(currently amended)** A container as defined in claim 3, wherein said first portion of each of said flexible valve elements is movable by an actuator element on said reprocessor, wherein said first portion of said flexible valve element is in said open position when said container is disposed within said reprocessor.

5. **(currently amended)** A container as defined in claim 1, wherein each of said flexible valve elements is formed of a resilient flexible material.

6. **(previously presented)** A container as defined in claim 1, wherein said tray includes three (3) flexible valve elements, each of which is independently movable between an open position and a closed position to open and close an associated opening in said tray.

7. **(currently amended)** A container for holding items to be microbially deactivated in a reprocessor, having:

a tray for holding said items to be deactivated;

a lid operable to cover said tray and to define an interior, sealed cavity that holds said items to be deactivated;

a fluid inlet passage into said cavity;

a fluid outlet passage into said cavity; and

at least one valve assembly on said tray associated with each of said passages, said valve assembly including a valve element that is movable through contact with an actuator on said reprocessor between an open position and a closed position, said valve element being movable to said open position when said container is placed within said reprocessor and moving to said closed position when said container is removed from said reprocessor, wherein said valve element includes a first portion movable relative to said tray and a second portion fixed relative to said tray.

8. **(original)** A container as defined in claim 7, wherein said valve assembly is movable by an actuator element on said reprocessor.

9. **(currently amended)** A container as defined in claim 7, wherein said valve assembly includes a flexible valve element having a first portion movable relative to said tray, said first portion of said flexible valve element having a normally closed position.

10. **(currently amended)** A container as defined in claim 9, wherein said normally closed first portion of said flexible valve element is movable to said open position by an external actuator on said reprocessor when said container is set in said reprocessor.

11. **(original)** A container as defined in claim 10, wherein said container includes at least two passages into said container and a valve assembly associated with each passage, one of said passages being a fluid inlet and the other being a fluid outlet.

12. **(currently amended)** A system for microbially deactivating items, comprising:

a circulation system for circulating a microbial decontamination fluid through a deactivation chamber that forms a part of said circulation system;

a container for holding items to be deactivated having a sealable cavity in which said items to be deactivated may be placed, said container having a fluid inlet and a fluid outlet, each having a flexible valve element that is movable between an open and a closed position to regulate fluid flow into and out of said cavity, each of said flexible valve elements have a first portion movable relative to said container and a second portion fixed relative to said container;

and

an actuator in said deactivation chamber associated with each flexible valve element operable to move said flexible valve element to an open position when said container is disposed within said deactivation chamber, wherein the cavity within said container is in fluid communication with said circulation system when said flexible valve elements are in said open position.

13. **(original)** A system as defined in claim 12, wherein

said circulation system includes a first fluid inlet line and a fluid outlet line that communicates with said deactivation chamber; and

said container includes a first fluid inlet port and a fluid outlet port that communicates respectively with said first fluid inlet line and said fluid outlet line of said circulation system when said container is disposed within said deactivation chamber.

Claims 14-15 **(canceled)**

16. **(currently amended)** A system as defined in claim 12, wherein each actuator physically contacts a flexible valve element and moves said flexible valve element to said open position when said container is placed in said deactivation chamber.

17. **(previously presented)** A system as defined in claim 16, wherein said actuators are movable relative to said deactivation chamber.

18. **(currently amended)** A system as defined in claim 17, wherein said deactivation chamber is defined by a housing panel and said actuators are mounted to said housing panel to allow limited motion of said actuators relative to said housing panel.

19. **(original)** A system as defined in claim 12, wherein said microbial decontamination fluid is a liquid solution.

20. **(original)** A system as defined in claim 12, wherein said circulation system is essentially closed loop and said microbial decontamination fluid is circulated through said closed loop.

21. **(currently amended)** A container as defined in ~~claims 1 or 7~~claim 1, further comprising a second fluid inlet having a flexible valve element that is movable between an open position and a closed position through contact with a mechanical actuator on a reprocessor.

22. **(previously presented)** A container as defined in claim 21, wherein one of said fluid inlets is in fluid communication with a nozzle within said container.

23. **(previously presented)** A container as defined in claim 21, wherein one of said fluid inlets is in fluid communication with fluid connectors connectable with medical instruments in said container.

24. **(currently amended)** A container ~~as defined in claim 21~~, for holding items to be microbially deactivated in a reprocessor, comprised of:

a generally cup-shaped tray having a bottom wall and a continuous side wall extending to one side from the periphery of said bottom wall, said bottom wall and said side wall defining a cavity for receiving instruments and items to be microbially deactivated;

a lid attachable to said tray, said lid dimensioned to cover said cavity;

a fluid inlet in said tray communicating with said cavity;

a fluid outlet in said tray communicating with said cavity, said fluid inlet and said fluid outlet each having a flexible valve element that is movable by a mechanical actuator on said

reprocessor between an open position to allow fluid flow through said container during a deactivation cycle and a closed position sealing said cavity; and

a second fluid inlet having a flexible valve element that is movable between an open position and a closed position through contact with a mechanical actuator on a reprocessor,
wherein one of said fluid inlets is in fluid communication with a seal defined between said tray and said lid.

25. (new) A container for holding items to be microbially deactivated in a reprocessor, having:

a tray for holding said items to be deactivated;

a lid operable to cover said tray and to define an interior, sealed cavity that holds said items to be deactivated;

a fluid inlet passage into said cavity;

a fluid outlet passage into said cavity;

at least one valve assembly on said tray associated with each of said passages, said valve assembly including a valve element that is movable through contact with an actuator on said reprocessor between an open position and a closed position, said valve element being movable to said open position when said container is placed within said reprocessor and moving to said closed position when said container is removed from said reprocessor; and

a second fluid inlet having a flexible valve element that is movable between an open position and a closed position through contact with a mechanical actuator on a reprocessor,

Application No. 10/633,349

Amendment dated July 27, 2005

RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION dated November 28, 2005

wherein one of said fluid inlets is in fluid communication with a seal defined between said tray and said lid.